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Contact:

Alejandra Lopez  
The Legal Aid Society  
917-294-9348  
[ailopez@legal-aid.org](mailto:ailopez@legal-aid.org)

**\*\*\*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE\*\*\***

## ***Legal Aid Urges President-Elect Biden to Enact Housing Policies that Benefit Low-Income New Yorkers***

(New York, NY) –The Legal Aid Society issued a [letter](#) today to President-Elect Joseph Biden and the Biden-Harris Transition Team urging the President-Elect to enact certain housing priorities and policies that are most consequential to Legal Aid clients and all low-income New York residents.

The [letter](#) states:

*“During your presidential campaign, you released an ambitious [\\$640 billion housing plan](#) to create opportunities for low- and middle-income Americans in various areas of housing. You made it clear that you understand that housing is a human right, not a privilege, and that far too many Americans lack access to affordable and quality housing—particularly communities of color who have been the target of systemic housing discrimination and other disparities.*

*Moreover, your transition team recently [pledged](#) to aid state and local governments whose finances have been hit hard by the coronavirus pandemic. As you know, New York is facing a multi-billion dollar budget gap, and Governor Andrew Cuomo has warned of drastic measures*

*to cover the budget gap if federal aid is not approved. With COVID-19 cases surging across the state and no clear budget solutions, we implore you to fulfill the housing plan and budget promises you made on the campaign trail.”*

The housing priorities are:

(1) **Emergency Rent Relief:** Congress is currently voting on a COVID relief package which includes 25 billion in rent relief. This is a good start but is not enough to address the epidemic of evictions and homelessness that we will see. We urge the Biden administration to work with Congress to pass rent relief that addresses the crisis and ensures low-income families in New York City and across the country are able to pay their rent and stay in their homes.

(2) **Renewing and Strengthening the Federal Eviction Moratorium:** While new statewide eviction moratorium legislation was passed (COVID-19 Emergency Eviction and Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2020 (S.9114/A.11181)), the Biden administration should immediately issue a new, universal eviction moratorium that bars *all* evictions, including against tenants whose leases have ended, and regardless of whether the tenant has made a sworn declaration regarding their income. In addition, a new Biden moratorium should require landlords to declare they notified their tenant of the CDC moratorium before trying to evict them.

(3) **Funding for Public Housing:** Some 380,000 New Yorkers live in public housing projects, representing one-seventh of the nation’s 2.6 million public housing residents. The New York City Housing Authority has estimated that it will require \$32 billion for repairs over the next five years to fix lead paint, heating systems, broken elevators and plumbing. We urge the Biden administration to work with Congress to fully fund public housing authorities to allow their residents to live in their homes with dignity.

(4) **Long-Term Rental Assistance for Low-Income Families:** The incoming HUD should issue guidance providing that discrimination against renters with housing choice vouchers violates the Fair Housing Act by disproportionately harming Black, Latino and disabled Americans. Such guidance would extend vital protections to the millions of voucher-holders who face rampant source-of-income discrimination in the private rental market.

(5) **Mixed-Immigration Status Families:** The Trump administration’s rule on “mixed- status” families threatens housing for 25,000 mixed-status families, according to HUD’s own analysis, and impose burdensome documentation requirements on millions of U.S. citizens currently receiving HUD assistance. Our clients in New York City would be disproportionately hard-hit due to the prevalence of the immigrant population in the city. The Biden administration should immediately suspend the issuance of this rule before it goes into effect.

(6) **Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing:** The Biden administration should reinstate the Obama-era rule and require states and localities as a precondition to receiving federal funding to identify and eliminate discriminatory practices, including restrictive zoning, source-of-income discrimination, and criminal background checks in housing.

(7) **Restoring the Fair Housing Act:** The incoming Biden administration should order the Justice Department to stop defending the unlawful Trump rule—which requires individuals subject to discrimination (due to bad housing policy) to show at the outset of a case, among other things, that a discriminatory policy is arbitrary and unnecessary— in court and reinstate HUD’s 2013 disparate impact rule.

To view the letter, [click here](#).

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*The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities.*

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